As a means of assessing the need for atomic energy and the possibilities of its development, the Agency during 1959 sent four "preliminary assistance missions" to carry out general surveys for a number of member countries. The first visited Burma, Ceylon, Indonesia and Thailand; the second China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines and Vietnam; the third Brazil and Venezuela; and the fourth Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Yugoslavia. In the same period the Agency found places for 209 fellows to train in 23 different countries; it received requests for the loan of 82 experts in all, a substantial number of which it was able to meet. New regulations for the granting of technical assistance were developed during the year with a view to making the most of limited available resources in money and manpower.

The issue of bibliographies, directories and other reference works on atomic energy was continued and also the publication of articles presenting the result of research studies in a number of specialized fields.

A number of expert conferences, panels and symposia were organized during the year, some of them jointly with other interested organizations, for the purpose of exchanging views and information on such subjects as medical radioisotope scanning; radioactivation analysis; educational problems of atomic energy; preservation of food by ionizing radiations; application of large radiation sources in industry; the meteorology of radionuclides; safe transportation of large radioactive sources; biological effects of ionizing radiations; methods of measuring tritium concentrations in water and the disposal of radioactive wastes. Further progress was made in the plans to build and equip a laboratory at Seibersdorf, near Vienna, towards which the United States announced that it would make a contribution of $600,000. This will be a functional not a general research laboratory, which will carry out studies directed toward the development of radioactive standards, the calibration of equipment, quality control, measurement and analysis in connection with the Agency's safeguards and health and safety programmes and in response to requests for service from member states to the extent that these can be met within the facilities available.

A number of requests from member countries for assistance in the procuring of equipment and materials have been dealt with, sometimes (but not always) as a part of the technical assistance programme. Japan had last year asked for the Agency's help in procuring natural uranium for a research reactor and the arrangements to purchase about 3 tons were completed in 1959. The metal sold to Japan had been presented to the Agency by Canada and the revenue from the sale will thus go towards the development of the Agency's programmes of research and assistance. In 1959 agreements were concluded with the United States, the United Kingdom and the U.S.S.R. by which these countries undertook to sell to the Agency for resale to other members specified quantities of uranium enriched in the isotope U-235. During the year Finland made a formal request for assistance in obtaining enriched uranium for use in the Triga Mark II research reactor it is planning.

The Agency has convened panels of experts to carry out reactor safety studies at the request of member states and is proceeding with the development of manuals and handbooks dealing with the safe handling of radioisotopes, safe transportation of radioactive materials and disposal of radioactive wastes. It also has an obligation under the statute to develop "safeguards" procedures to ensure that the assistance it makes available is not used in such a way as to further any military purpose. The Board of Governors is at present working intensively on this problem with a view to developing an agreement on safeguards at the earliest possible date.

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